

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5544

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UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 2565

USIA FOR IOP/M, ILA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP, SOPN

SUBJECT: MEDIA TREATMENT OF AMBASSADOR ISHAM'S

DEPARTURE PRESS CONFERENCE, OTHER EVENTS

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 2501

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR ISHAM USED A JULY 6 PRE-DEPARTURE PRESS CONFERENCE AND OTHER PUBLIC OCCASIONS TO PUT FORWARD OFFICIAL U.S. POSITIONS AND HIS PERSONAL VIEWS ON WIDE RANGE OF BILATERAL ISSUES. HUMAN RIGHTS, U.S. ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND U.S. - CUBAN RELATIONS ATTRACTED THE GREATEST INTEREST, PRODUCED WIDESPREAD NEWS AND ANALYSIS. OVERALL TREATMENT DURING FINAL TWO WEEKS OF AMBASSADOR'S TOUR CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS FITTING TRIBUTE TO HIM AND HIS SUCCESS IN HAITI. END SUMMARY.

1. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE TWO DAYS BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE, AMBASSADOR GAVE A "TOUR D'HORIZON" ON THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. - HAITIAN RELATIONS DURING HIS THREE AND ONE HALF YEARS HERE. IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT AND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOWED, HE REITERATED BASIC TENETS OF U.S. POLICIES TOWARD HAITI. EXPRESSING SATISFACTION AT HAITI'S VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS

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RESOLUTION AT THE GRENADA OAS CONFERENCE, HE NOTED THE POSITIVE TRENDS IN HAITI'S HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE, I.E., THE RECONVENING OF THE CRIMINAL ASSIZES AFTER A 14-YEAR HIATUS, THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, THE REDRESSING OF ABUSES BY THE AUTHORITIES, AND THE INCREASING ROLE OF THE PRESS IN CALLING ATTENTION TO NATIONAL PROBLEMS AND GOVERNMENT SHORTCOMINGS. HE REITERATED U.S. CONCERN FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE POOREST OF THE POOR IN

ITS ASSISTANCE EFFORTS, NOTING THAT THAT CONCERN WAS NOW SHARED BY THE GOH. HE SAID THE DEEPEST, MOST ENDURING IMPRESSION OF HAITI WAS THE GREAT DISPARITY BETWEEN RICH AND POOR, THE CHASM BETWEEN THE "REPUBLIC OF PORT-AU-PRINCE" AND THE HINTERLAND. FURTHER CHANGES, NEW EMPHASES ARE NEEDED, HE STRESSED, AND SUGGESTED OBLIGATORY RURAL SERVICE FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES AND ORIENTING EDUCATION TOWARD DEVELOPMENT NEEDS.

2. THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS PROMINENTLY REPORTED BY ALL MEDIA. PRO-GOVERNMENT LE MATIN HEADLINED ITS JULY 8 EDITION "AMBASSADOR ISHAM JUDGES HAITI: THERE IS A CLEAR EVOLUTION IN HUMAN RIGHTS, HE SAYS." LEADING RADIO METROPOLE AND RADIO HAITI-INTER ALSO UNDERSCORED HIS REFERENCES TO HUMAN RIGHTS. OTHER NEWSPAPERS SUMMARIZED THE ENTIRE PRESS CONFERENCE UNDER LESS SENSATIONAL HEADLINES, AND TELE-HAITI SHOWED ITS TAPED VERSION TWICE IN PRIME TIME. INDEPENDENT DAILY PANORAMA WAS THE MOST SUCCINCT, SAYING THAT "AMBASSADOR ISHAM ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS WITH NUANCES BUT WITHOUT BIAS, AFFIRMING AND REAFFIRMING IN EACH RESPONSE THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO PEACE, PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY FOR THE COMMON MAN."

3. INDEPENDENT INTELLECTUAL WEEKLY LE PETIT SAMEDI SOIR, HOWEVER, PRODUCED THE MOST PROVOCATIVE REACTION IN ITS JULY 9-15 EDITION. RECALLING AMBASSADOR ISHAM'S DESCRIPTION IN A 1976 INTERVIEW OF HIS ROLE AS THAT OF "THE VOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES," PSS REMARKED THAT "WITH RESPECT TO AMERICAN POLICY UNCLASSIFIED

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TOWARD THE THIRD WORLD WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE AMBASSADOR IS REALLY THE GUARDIAN OF AMERICAN IDEOLOGY, THE SYRUP TO MAKE THE PILL GO DOWN IN CERTAIN CASES." BUT THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDED WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMENT: "HEYWARD ISHAM, MADLY ENAMORED OF OUR POPULAR CULTURE, HAS GONE. WHAT IS THERE TO JUSTIFY HIS RECALL TO WASHINGTON? THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN IN THE USSR, IN THE FAR EAST, GERMANY, ETC....AND WHO HAS TAKEN ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF A SHOCK AMBASSADOR, AN INTELLECTUAL AMBASSADOR.....HE IS ALL OF THAT...AND THEN SOME."

PSS PRINTED ANOTHER COMMENT ALONGSIDE THE FIRST, ENTITLING IT "WHY THE SUDDEN RECALL?" THE WEEKLY SUGGESTED THAT A CHANGE OF AMBASSADORS IS NECESSARY IN ORDER FOR WASHINGTON TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD HAITI.

A NEW, UNKNOWN REPRESENTATIVE, SAID THE ARTICLE, COULD DO THIS MORE EFFECTIVELY. IN CONCLUDING, HOWEVER, PSS SAID THAT "THE CHANGE AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY MAY BECOME A MEANS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN HAITI AND THE U.S. INTEGRATED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AN INTELLIGENT APPROACH TO REAL HAITIAN PROBLEMS, MORE ACTIVE CULTURAL COOPERATION...THESE ARE THE THINGS TO

WHICH THE NEW AMBASSADOR COULD DEVOTE HIMSELF."

4. THE PRESS CONFERENCE STIMULATED WIDESPREAD NEWS COVERAGE, COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS AND GREATLY HEIGHTENED OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC AWARENESS OF U.S. VIEWS ON SEVERAL IMPORTANT ISSUES. THE FLURRY OF MEDIA ATTENTION TO EVERY PUBLIC ACT SURROUNDING THE AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE -- THE PRESS CONFERENCE, THE JULY 4 RECEPTION, HIS CALL ON THE PRESIDENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S REMARKS, NUMEROUS FAREWELLS BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CITIZENS-- REFLECT SINCERE ADMIRATION AND RESPECT AND A REAL SENSE OF LOSS AMONG HAITIANS FROM EVERY WALK OF LIFE. "ISHAM," GOES THE FREQUENT COMMENT, "WAS LIKE NO OTHER AMBASSADOR. HE CAME TO KNOW HAITI LIKE NO ONE ELSE BEFORE."

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